



# Best Management Practices for Construction and Development Projects Swainson's Warbler *Limnothlypis swainsonii*

**Common name** • Swainson's Warbler  
**Scientific name** • *Limnothlypis swainsonii*  
**Federal status** • None  
**State status** • Endangered

## Purpose and Use

The information in this document is to be used to help avoid and minimize species impacts due to construction practices. It is not intended to be used as a guide to manage habitat for a given species. If that is the goal, please contact the Department of Conservation for habitat management information. Because every project and location differs, following the recommendations within this document does not ensure that impacts will not occur to the species and additional information might be required in certain instances. Following the recommendations within this document does not complete Endangered Species Act consultation that may be necessary for species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act; please contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for more information.

## Ecology

Swainson's Warblers are secretive, neotropical migrants that nest in southeastern United States and winter in Belize and on Caribbean islands. In Missouri, they may be found in the southeastern part of the state, as well as in favorable habitat along the southern border. Swainson's Warblers inhabit and breed in stands of giant cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*) within extensively forested landscapes along stream and river flood plains. To be used by these birds, these areas must have high canopy cover and dense vegetation. Breeding begins in April, with females building nests approximately 2-10 feet above the ground. Clutches typically have three eggs. Young hatch after 13-15 days of incubation, leave the nest at 10-12 days and remain with the adults for another 2-3 weeks. Swainson's Warblers prey on insects that they find among leaf litter.

## Reasons for Decline

There are no records indicating Swainson's Warblers were ever common in Missouri. However, large-scale timber harvests and conversion of bottomland forests to agriculture and reservoirs have likely caused dramatic declines in populations. In particular, cane removal eliminates preferred breeding habitat for these migratory birds.

## Specific Recommendations

Swainson's Warblers have very narrow habitat requirements and, thus, are dependent upon protection and restoration of canebrakes, swamps, and thickets in moist bottomland woods.

- Project activities should not occur within 100 feet of wetland habitat within the range of this species from late April to mid-August to avoid disturbing nesting pairs and from mid-August to October 1, since these birds stay near breeding habitat until migration.
- Erosion and sediment controls should be implemented, maintained, and monitored for the duration of the project.
- Maintain special habitat features such as tall dense stands of giant cane, overstory canopy, and leaf litter on ground to provide habitat for Swainson's Warblers.
- Draining or destroying known wetland habitat along streams should be avoided.
- Forests adjunct to streambeds with giant cane should be thinned occasionally between October 1 and April 1 to allow for new growth.

## General Recommendations

Refer to Management Recommendations for Construction Projects Affecting Missouri Wetlands and Management Recommendations for Construction Projects Affecting Missouri Streams and Rivers.

If your project involves the use of Federal Highway Administration transportation funds, these recommendations may not fulfill all contract requirements. Please contact the Missouri Department of Transportation at 573-526-4778 or [www.modot.mo.gov/ehp/index.htm](http://www.modot.mo.gov/ehp/index.htm) for additional information on recommendations.

## Information Contacts

For further information regarding regulations for development in wetlands, rivers, and streams, contact:

For species information:

[Missouri Department of Conservation](http://www.mdc.mo.gov)  
Resource Science Division  
P.O. Box 180  
2901 W. Truman Blvd  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180  
Telephone: 573/751-4115

For species information and Endangered Species Act Coordination:

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)

Ecological Services  
101 Park Deville Drive, Suite A  
Columbia, MO 65203-0007  
Telephone: 573/234-2132

For Clean Water Act Coordination:

[Missouri Department of Natural Resources](#)

Water Protection Program  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176  
Telephone: 573/751-1300, 800/361-4827

[U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#)

Regulatory Branch  
700 Federal Building  
Kansas City, MO 64106-2896  
Telephone: 816/983-3990

[U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#)

Water, Wetlands, and Pesticides Division  
901 North 5th Street  
Kansas City, KS 66101  
Telephone: 913/551-7307

## **Disclaimer**

These Best Management Practices were prepared by the Missouri Department of Conservation with assistance from state and federal agencies, contractors and others to provide guidance to those people who wish to voluntarily act to protect wildlife and habitat. Compliance with these Best Management Practices is not required by the Missouri wildlife and forestry law nor by any regulation of the Missouri Conservation Commission. Other federal laws such as the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act, and state or local laws need to be considered for construction and development projects, and require permits and/or consultation with the appropriate agency. Following the recommendations provided in this document will help reduce and avoid project impacts to the species, but impacts may still occur. Please contact the appropriate agency for further coordination and to complete compliance requirements.